



Understanding the Term Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD), the Time Limit, and Waivers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- **What is an ABAWD?** An ABAWD is a person between the ages of 18 and 49 who has no dependents. ABAWD stands for **Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents**.
- **What is the time limit?** ABAWDs can get SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) for only 3 months in 3 years if they do not meet certain extra work requirements. This is called the time limit. This rule is part of the law that governs the operation of SNAP. It has been part of the law since 1996. Some ABAWDs are exempt from the time limit because of age or pregnancy, because they are unfit to work, or because they are already working most of the time.
- **What is a waiver?** The law allows States to ask the Federal Government if they can temporarily stop using, or waive, the time limit based on evidence showing that there is a high unemployment rate or not enough jobs to go around. The law does not require States to ask for waivers.
- **How does a State get a waiver?** To qualify for a waiver, States have to provide certain evidence showing that there are not enough jobs. Generally States qualify for a waiver in all or part of a State if they have eligibility for extended unemployment benefits, a recent unemployment rate of over 10 percent, a recent 24-month average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national unemployment rate for that same 24-month period, or are designated as a Labor Surplus Area by the U.S. Department of Labor. States can choose to apply for the whole State or only part. States make these decisions and submit a request with supporting data to USDA where it is reviewed and either approved or denied.
- **How long does the waiver last?** Most waivers are for 1 year. The waiver doesn't have to match the calendar year. States can choose what timeframe they want to ask for. States can also choose to stop a waiver at any time.
- **How does a State choose what areas the waiver is for?** This decision is up to the State. Even if they qualify for the whole State, they might choose to ask for a waiver for only part of the State or not at all. States have a lot of flexibility when it comes to the waivers and how they are designed. The Federal Government reviews what the State asks for and then either approves or denies the request.
- **Which States have a waiver?** This Web page includes a link to lists of States with waivers: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds>. Charts are updated each quarter of the calendar year.
- **What does it mean for my clients if my State doesn't have a waiver?** When there is no waiver, then the time limit is in effect for all ABAWDs. They must meet the extra work requirements in order to keep getting SNAP benefits beyond the time limit. SNAP caseworkers can help clients who have a time limit find a job, training, or a volunteer opportunity.

